

Donna Baier Stein

FOR WE ARE KIN

On good days, it might have been Copland:
inverted tulips of petticoats
(open, swirling, white),
heels of proud boots clicking,
flurries of bonnets,
big suns, big moons, land.

Now, the gray-backed highway
furrows Kansas ceaselessly:
a horn's long-drawn-out howl,
smooth and languid
as these plains.

Days, indistinguishable
as cornstalks in the field,
slip away until in sun-stroked visions
I see four women waiting amidst the corn:
my great-grandmother, grandmother,
mother, and me.

The first – keeper of bees, baker of pies,
cook for thirty burly fellows.
The second wooed under clean-flying sheets
on a clothesline, a fresh-smelling widow
at forty. Then mother,
whose dream-embroidered bodice
I nuzzled before leaving
to follow the faint hum of wires
stretching east.

The land buckled.
The fields crowded
with unfamiliar faces.
Women, I whispered, *draw near to me*.
Sturdy as silos.
Resilient as summer wheat.
Rich as loam.

Draw near, for we are kin.
Cross-bred but kin,
we hurl each savory seed
into a blue bowl of sky.